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# The Spoils System Challenges American Foresters

By H. H. CHAPMAN

TO THOSE of us who have observed and participated in the forestry movement for the past three or more decades the present era is even more significant than it must appear to men who contemplate, as we did, making forestry a life work.

In 1900 the age of exploitation in the Lakes States pineries was at its height, and the development of the same type of lumbering was well under way in the South and vigorously started in the Pacific Northwest. These large scale operations based on the theory of mass production in big units were a logical growth of the economic forces which in all other industrial enterprises were trending towards bigness, seeking economies in manufacture and lowering the costs of production and prices to the consumer. Such practice appeared as economically sound in lumbering as it did in steel and cotton.

VIEWS from the present vantage of experience, the industry and the public can now see what foresters visualized at the start. No stream can rise higher than its source. No industry can survive the exhaustion of its raw materials. The basic resource in lumbering, as in agriculture, is land. On the conservation of its productiveness rests the economic life, which means the physical existence of the race. The pyramid of any civilization is based on the soil and waters, their biological and mineral products, and the yield in stored up (fuel) or currently produced energy (plant and animal life).

In human affairs the impact of new ideas and technology releases new forces, as happened in the industrial revolution. These developments are made possible by underlying conditions, physical, economic, political and social. Once the new order is established it rapidly tends to become crystallized in practice and in habits of thought. The European immigrant was not slow in shaking off a traditional old world conservatism in the use of soil and its resources, which was of necessity retained unbroken in such nations as Germany, France and Scandinavia.

Instead, he recognized that the margin of profit here lay in the harvesting of wealth which he had not created, the reaping of crops he had not sowed. There was no discernible profit in forest conservation for the private operator in expenditures on fire protection and investments in young growing stock or reproduction, in the face of public indifference to fire and a system of taxation itself a product of the age of exploitation.

**F**ORESTERS faced the task of bringing about a complete revolution of attitude on the part of an entire civilization; no less than the substitution or restoration of an economy based on permanent and careful husbandry of otherwise vanishing resources of the soil in place of the free and glorious epoch of pioneer energy and extravagance. The difficulty of this task is well illustrated by the trend of present political policies, which in seeking the way out of an economic impasse, instinctively turns to the prodigal methods of an outgrown era and seeks by lavish flow of supposedly inexhaustible financial resources to lift us out of the depression by our own bootstraps.

In still another way this holdover of pioneer habits of thought arises to plague and hamper us in the effort to establish the new era. In a rapidly developing economic and political period, the spoils system of politics is broadly accepted not merely as a necessary evil but as a definite philosophy of government. One man is "just as good" as another. Political victory carries with it regard for party loyalty in the form of jobs. The idea that public administration is a highly technical business, demanding expert and trained services fully on a par with private enterprises has to make headway slowly against this primitive and rudimentary social tradition of the Jacksonian era of our national life. Yet we find ourselves suddenly faced, in forestry as in all other federal and state activities, with a sweeping recrudescence of this spoils doctrine under the banner of its patron saint and with the vigorous, ruthless and skillful marshalling of all forces of the administration in its defense.

Confronted with the need for wisely planned economy for the better utilization of our physical and financial resources, we find ourselves submerged in a maelstrom of ill considered and uncoordinated plans whose backing is unlimited drafts on the present and future credit resources of the nation.

**F**ACED with the prime necessity of establishing once and for all the merit system of employment in public affairs, including all forms of soil conservation, we are caught in a flood tide

of reaction towards the good old pioneer days of political "loyalty" and partisan machines, in which the party coffers are filled by levies on the salaries of office holders, technicians of long service and trained ability are dismissed to make room for more of the faithful, and men ignorant even of the basic goals and objectives, much less of the technique of accomplishment in conversation, are blithely placed in charge of such departments and instructed to go down the line in selecting their subordinates, at the behest of local political chiefs.

I am speaking of existing facts, not of possible tendencies. Unless intelligent planning and coordination takes the place of reckless waste, and until trained administrators can be protected in the exercise of public trusts and responsibilities, this nation, regardless of all grandiose planning, will pursue to the bitter dregs the logical results of the free and easy policies of a prodigal youth.

Thus it would seem that the vision of the forester, of a nation husbanding its soil and forests, renewing its strength by wise conservation of trees, plants and animal life, of agriculture and forestry, minerals and game, waters and human energy, is not to be fulfilled by the mere weight of logic or appeal to sentiment and reason. Its triumph can come only by coming to grips with these inherited evils which, like a poisoned appendix in the human body, may bring the entire nation to ruin through its outlived usefulness.

**F**ORESTERS do not need to be told that public service in their profession can be made promising and worth the while of a professionally trained man only if the career is made to depend solely on the worth of his achievements and his ability in securing sound results. A few there are who temporarily bow the knee to Baal or even kiss his foot in return for fairly lucrative jobs—but having been driven by expediency to accept or even defend the political system in conservation, they soon lose out, are replaced by others of their persuasion, "and the place thereof knows them no more."

Not only the permanent welfare of the country in this new era of conservation, but the very existence of the profession of forestry itself depends now and has from the days of Fernow and Pinchot, solely upon the final triumph and establishment of the merit system in public office.

As individuals foresters are helpless to combat these organized, titanic forces of political expediency and corruption. The Pennsylvania state employee, who is forced to pay a part of his

salary to the existing party machine, or who is replaced after thirty years of faithful service by someone with strong political sponsorship, must merely fold his tent and slip away to seek a job elsewhere unless pursued by a political vendetta or blacklist, which closes such avenues of reemployment.

ONLY through a united front, and by fighting for basic principles of public policy and welfare, and by this means enlisting widespread and powerful public support, can the individual members of any profession protect or advance either their own welfare or that of the public which they serve. But by this means they can and will exert probably the most powerful of all influences in the bringing about of the new deal.

For this end, the Society of American Foresters exists, and towards these objectives it will strive. Those who are indifferent to the ends in view, those who are self sufficient and distrust united efforts, or those who are willing to receive the benefits of professional advancement without sharing its costs, will remain indifferent to their professional society. Only about one-fifth of those practicing law belong to the bar associations which are constantly struggling to elevate the standards of legal ethics. If this proportion were reversed, it is my belief that the overwhelming burden of crime in America might be considerably reduced through bettering the standards of legal practice. The medical societies have been found to be the only effective means for protecting the public against numerous forms of charlatanism and quackery which still flourish lucratively.

FORESTERS by their training and experience, by the breadth of view demanded in their profession, and by temperament, are fitted to be the leaders in conservation not merely through their grasp of sound technique, but because they embody the principle of stability and efficiency in administration upon which the future edifice of economic and political empire must be founded. The Society offers them a field for free and open discussion and criticism not only of technique but of political policies and administrative activities. If censorship increases it may even become a last citadel for professional freedom of thought. At the same time, through it the profession can put up both a united and an organized front in the warfare against reaction and self interest which would obstruct the coming of the era of true conservation and permanent welfare and prosperity.



**D**R. R. M. HUGHES, president of Iowa State College since 1927, brought to a close his brilliant and aggressive career of 23 years as a college president, when he tendered his resignation in March of this year. Continued poor health and his sincere consciousness of his heavy responsibilities prompted President Hughes in this action.

After accepting his resignation as president, the State Board of Education made Dr. Hughes president emeritus. He is the first person to hold such a position at the college. Continuing as a member of the faculty, he will devote his time to working with the students and will perform such duties as Pres. Charles E. Friley may assign to him. Next fall he will inaugurate a new senior course in the field of student problems.



ALMOST simultaneously with the acceptance of the resignation of Pres. R. M. Hughes, the Board of Education called Dr. Charles E. Friley to the presidency. Dr. Friley has been dean of Industrial Science since September, 1932, and vice-president of the college during the past year. When President Hughes left the campus for a six months leave of absence last November, Dr. Friley assumed the additional responsibilities of the president.

He intends to follow the policies so well established by Dr. Hughes. Feeling the personal element has been lost in mass education, he stresses quality rather than quantity in education and looks toward a system which will develop the individual.